

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: MAY 28, 2010

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS PITKIN
 KENNY
 BENTLEY
 MERLINO
 STRAINER
 LOEB
 McDEVITT

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

 SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER
 DEANNA PARK, DIRECTOR OF THE COUNTRYSIDE ADULT HOME
 MARGARET SING-SMITH, DIRECTOR OF THE YOUTH BUREAU
 PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE
 & FISCAL SERVICES
 NICOLE LIVINGSTON, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
 KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
 SUPERVISOR THOMAS
 DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
 JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Pitkin called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:17 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Referring to the Overtime Report included on the agenda, Ms. Weaver announced overtime usage had decreased by approximately five hours as compared to 2009. She advised she continued to include CPS (Child Protective Services) on the report due to the fact that cases remained open for 60 days and the number of ongoing CPS cases was higher than 2009. Mr. Pitkin asked if Berkshire Farms assisted in reducing the number of cases and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively and said all of the long term CPS cases had been transferred to either Berkshire Farms or Preventative Services.

Pertaining to the Budget Performance Report, Ms. Weaver stated the DSS had generated 19% of the anticipated revenue for 2010 and had expended 33% of the anticipated expenditures for 2010. She noted the Countryside Adult Home was also well within their budget.

Ms. Weaver referenced a handout included in the agenda packet which contained a bar graph depicting an increase in caseloads for 2010. She added Food Stamp cases had increased 18% for January and February, 16% for March and 15% for April compared to 2009. She said there were six employees in the Food Stamp Unit and she was unsure if they would be able to keep up with the workload. Mr. Merlino asked if a tracking system was in place to determine if the cases were long time residents or people who had recently moved to the County and Ms. Weaver replied in the negative. Ms. Weaver added due to the economy they were seeing a

diversity of people applying for assistance. She stated there would be an increase of cases when the unemployment benefits of people currently collecting expired.

Mr. Loeb entered the meeting at 11:22 a.m.

Mr. Pitkin asked if there would be an issue with staffing in the Food Stamps Unit and Ms. Weaver responded she had transferred an employee from the Employment Unit to the Food Stamp Unit last month for a total of seven employees in the Food Stamp Unit. She reported with the new electronic program it took four times as long to process applications; therefore, she added, she was unsure if seven employees would be sufficient to maintain the same level of service in the Unit. Mr. McDevitt questioned the cost to the County for the Food Stamp Program and Ms. Weaver responded until 2010 the State had paid 25% of the administrative costs but now the cost was covered 50% by the County and 50% by the Federal government. She added the cost of the Food Stamps issued was reimbursed. Brief discussion ensued.

Ms. Weaver announced she had instituted a new initiative in the DSS called the Team Player of the Month. She added it was a means to recognize staff who went above and beyond their regular duties, worked well with other Units, or were seen by their co-workers as a team player. She explained the Team Player of the Month was allotted a parking space next to the back entrance, received a \$15 gift card and posters were displayed in the Office.

Ms. Weaver reported she had received a letter of appreciation from the State for the Department's work in meeting the State and Federal Work Participation Rate requirements. She explained the Participation Rate was the level of employable individuals participating in employment activities. She added the State had to obtain a certain percentage in order to draw Federal funding and she commended the DSS staff on an outstanding job.

Ms. Weaver requested to extend the current contract with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) for operation of the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program, for a term commencing October 1, 2010 and terminating September 30, 2011, for a total amount not to exceed \$108,000. She advised the Program assisted individuals in learning how to spend their Food Stamps more effectively. Mr. Strainer voiced his opinion that CCE worked hard with the DSS to get individuals to eat healthier.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to authorize the extension of the current contract with Cornell Cooperative Extension as outlined. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 18, 2010 Board meeting.*

Mr. Pitkin stated it was necessary to have a resolution to authorize the Deputy Commissioner of the DSS to act in the absence of Ms. Weaver. He added this was a request from the State which would change the Deputy Commissioner position to a non-competitive position.

Motion was made by Mr. McDevitt and seconded by Mr. Kenny to authorize the Deputy Commissioner of the DSS to act on behalf of the Commissioner in her absence, thereby changing the position to a non-competitive position.

Mr. Strainer said he was opposed to the Deputy Commissioner position becoming non-competitive. Paul Dusek, County Attorney/Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services,

explained a few months ago the Deputy Commissioner position had been reviewed by the Committee who had decided that it was preferable for the position to have a non-competitive status. He added the Personnel Officer held a hearing as required by Civil Service regulations and sent the application to the State. He advised the State had raised a few issues on the non-competitive status, one of which was the need for a County resolution. He said the final decision of competitive or non-competitive would be made by the State.

Ms. Weaver apprised the Deputy Commissioner took the Civil Service test for the position and they were awaiting the results. Mr. Strainer explained his understanding was the non-competitive position in the Department would be the Confidential Secretary and he did not like the idea of the Deputy position becoming non-competitive because it opened up the possibility of nepotism and favoritism in filling the vacant position. He voiced his opinion it was unfair to employees below that position who were working to be promoted. Mr. Kenny said the position should be non-competitive if the employee would be working in the absence of the Commissioner. Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Pitkin called the question and the motion carried by majority vote, with Mr. Strainer voting in opposition, to authorize the Deputy Commissioner of the DSS to act on behalf of the Commissioner in her absence, thereby changing the position to a non-competitive position. *The necessary resolution was authorized for the June 18, 2010 Board meeting.*

Ms. Weaver requested authorization for employees to attend meetings or conventions, as follows:

- ▶ one employee to attend the 14th Annual Aging Concerns Unite Us Conference at the Desmond Hotel in Albany, New York on June 8-9, 2010;
- ▶ two employees to attend The Logic to Contracting with Parents Programs at the High Peaks Resort in Lake Placid, New York on July 13-14, 2010, with a room rate of \$51 and \$15 per day for meal costs;
- ▶ three employees to attend the NYWFIA 27th Annual Training Seminar at the Radisson Hotel Rochester in Rochester, New York on June 6-9, 2010, with a room rate of \$169 and \$43 per day for meal costs;
- ▶ eleven employees to attend the NYPWA Summer Conference at the Saratoga Hilton in Saratoga Springs, New York on July 19-21, 2010 with \$13 per day for meal costs; and
- ▶ one employee to attend the NYSBA Advanced Document Drafting for the Elder Law Practitioner at the New York State Nurse's Association in Latham, New York on June 11, 2010, with \$15 for meal costs.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Loeb and carried unanimously to authorize attendance at the meetings and conventions as presented. *Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver requested to fill the vacant position of Social Welfare Examiner #1 in the Temporary Assistance Unit, base salary of \$29,710, Employee No. 11539, due to resignation. She said the position was mandated, reimbursed at 75% and the County's share of the salary was \$6,977. Mr. Kenny asked if there was a decrease in the number of Temporary Assistance cases and Ms. Weaver explained the number of applicants was increasing but the report did not show the number of applicants that had been denied. Mr. Pitkin asked if the qualifications for Temporary Assistance had been changed to be more restrictive and Ms. Weaver replied

affirmatively.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position as outlined and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver requested to authorization to submit a grant application the the NYSOTDA (New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance) Bureau of Contract Management to obtain housing and supportive services for homeless sex offenders, in an amount not less than \$100,000 and not to exceed \$7 million. She advised the grant funding could be utilized to renovate the Old Jail. She said she had discussed the current condition of the building with a representative from NYSOTDA who had stated the grant funding would cover the abatement of lead paint and the removal of asbestos. She apprised if she applied for the grant, a letter of approval from the Town of Queensbury waiving the rules on the number of sex offenders at one location would be required.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Merlino to authorize submission of the grant application as presented.

Mr. Kenny questioned if the application needed a dollar amount as part of the request or an estimate of the cost of renovations. Ms. Weaver responded they would need an estimate of renovation costs, someone to serve as a developer associate who would oversee the estimate and an annual operating budget and debt service for seven years. Mr. Kenny said he was in favor of renovating the Old Jail as a homeless facility but he was curious about the staffing requirements. Ms. Weaver explained there were several ways to operate the shelter and added some shelters operated from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m. and others were open 24 hours a day. She commented supportive services would need to be offered and the Probation Department was willing to work jointly with the DSS. She added the Probation Department currently had sex offender counseling groups in operation. Mr. Kenny asked if the grant was only for construction or for administration as well. Ms. Weaver responded it was a capital grant to rehabilitate, acquire or construct housing. She added there was a second grant which was a homeless intervention program to pay for services for homeless individuals.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Strainer asked if modular housing was covered under the grant and Ms. Weaver responded the representative from NYSOTDA did not say modular housing was excluded but they had reservations as counties who had used modular housing in the past had not been successful. Mr. Merlino said modular housing in the lot next to the Sheriff's Office was preferable and could be monitored more easily. Referring to the Old Jail, Mr. Thomas mentioned studies had been completed pertaining to lead paint abatement and asbestos removal. Mr. Kenny voiced his opinion that the Old Jail was a better choice than modular housing. Mr. Pitkin stated modular housing could be used as a temporary solution until the Old Jail renovations were completed.

Mr. Pitkin asked if the County would continue to qualify for reimbursement of housing the homeless and sex offenders if they owned the facility and Ms. Weaver responded to the best of her knowledge they would. Mr. Pitkin suggested a local law explaining the way Warren County handled sex offenders and disallowing other counties to send their sex offenders to Warren County. Mr. Bentley asked if the facility would be solely for sex offenders or for all

homeless. Ms. Weaver responded one floor would be dedicated to housing sex offenders and one floor dedicated to housing homeless individuals. She noted homeless families would be placed elsewhere. Mr. Thomas mentioned there were challenges with renovating the Old Jail and Ms. Weaver responded the challenges could be taken care of as long as costs did not exceed \$7 million. Mr. McDevitt asked if there were stipulations that would require the County to accept sex offenders from other counties and Ms. Weaver replied in the negative.

Mr. Pitkin called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to authorize the submission of a grant application to the NYSOTDA Bureau of Contract Management to obtain housing and supportive services for homeless sex offenders, in an amount not less than \$100,000 and not to exceed \$7 million. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 18, 2010 Board meeting.*

Ms. Weaver apprised there were several occurrences where a County fleet vehicle was not available when they were needed by the DSS staff to transport a foster child or complete a removal. She said she had contacted the Sheriff to determine if there were any vehicles available from drug seizures and he had informed her there were none at this time but he would let her know when vehicles were available. She stated the cars purchased by the DSS in 2009 had reduced the amount expended on mileage reimbursements. She added she might need to request the purchase of additional cars in the 2011 budget. Mr. Pitkin noted the policy had been changed so if anyone was going on vacation that had a vehicle assigned to them the vehicle was returned to the fleet during that time. Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Dusek apprised the issue had been researched by the previous Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services but he felt it was advisable to continue an investigation of the issue and find a means to resolve it. He added following his investigation he would report to the County Facilities Committee to determine a resolution to the issue. Mr. Kenny noted there were many Health Services fleet vehicles in the parking lot that he believed were not currently being used. It was the consensus of the Committee to request Mr. Dusek complete an internal review of the County fleet vehicle situation and to refer the issue to the County Facilities Committee.

Ms. Weaver reported she had received a request from Jack Diamond, Mayor of the City of Glens Falls, to adopt a policy to restrict where homeless individuals were placed. Mr. Kenny asked if the request pertained to properties where back taxes were owed. Mr. McDevitt said he believed the request pertained to chronic abusers who owed back taxes being used to house the homeless. Ms. Weaver said there were currently six homeless individuals, three of whom were sex offenders. Mr. McDevitt said he would volunteer to assist Mayor Diamond and Ms. Weaver in developing a policy. Mr. Strainer agreed the County should not be utilizing hotels that were not paying their taxes to house homeless. Mr. Kenny asked if there was more than one location in the City of Glens Falls where homeless were housed and Ms. Weaver replied they were currently housing one at the Madden Hotel but the majority of the hotels refused to take the homeless/sex offenders. It was the consensus of the Committee to allow Mr. McDevitt to work with Mayor Diamond and Ms. Weaver and report back the Committee at the next meeting.

Referring to the possibility of using modular housing as a temporary solution, Mr. Loeb asked what the next step should be. Mr. Kenny advised the next step would be determined by the result of the grant application. Mr. Pitkin said they would need to wait until the grant award before implementing a temporary solution. Ms. Weaver noted last year the grant awards were

received in September. Mr. Kenny apprised modular housing would require a foundation and building permits. Mr. Pitkin requested that Mr. Dusek research the issue and report back to the Committee at the next meeting.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Deanna Park, Director of Countryside Adult Home, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Park reported overtime usage had decreased by 83.6 hours as compared to 2009. She said there were currently 39 residents, 13 males and 26 females, and the average age was 74.9 years. She added four referrals had been received this month, one of which needed to be referred to a nursing home. One of the referrals, she continued, was scheduled for a tour next week. Of the pending referrals from last month, she said, one would be touring the facility next week. She stated one admission would be completed next week for a resident who had left to enter a rehab facility.

Ms. Park apprised she continued to collect information pertaining to an Adult Day Care Program. She added her research had determined that although an Adult Day Care Program generated little income, it was anticipated that it would eventually increase the number of long term residents.

Ms. Park requested a transfer of funds in the amount of \$20,000 from part-time salaries to overtime salaries per a request from the Treasurer's Office, due to the fact that 51% of the amount budgeted for overtime had been expended. Mr. Kenny asked if Ms. Park foresaw a shortfall before the end of the year and Ms. Park replied affirmatively. Mr. Geraghty stated funds should not be transferred until it was necessary. Mr. Dusek explained the Treasurer issued monthly reports and offered suggestions. He added whether or not a transfer of funds was authorized was determined by the supervising Committee and the Finance Committee. He suggested delaying the transfer of funds until it was necessary.

Referring to a VA (Veterans' Administration) Independence Grant for which an application was submitted, Ms. Park stated, three complete applications had been submitted and an additional 14 applications would be submitted later that day. She said she had been advised to delay submission of the 14 applications which required additional documents (birth certificates, marriage licenses) because missing documents would delay the decision but they decided to submit the applications in order to cement the reactive date.

Ms. Park reported she had asked for employee suggestions, two of which she had followed up on. Based on one suggestion, she added, a Facebook page had been established for Countryside Adult Home.

Ms. Weaver reported that she had toured an adult home facility which also housed the homeless in Chenango County last week, along with Mr. Dusek and Mr. Pitkin. She added Chenango County had been welcoming and it was a nice facility, that was two stories and their empty beds were on the second floor. She advised the homeless were housed on the second floor in a separate wing of the facility with a separate entrance and dining area. Mr. Dusek said the tour of the facility opened additional discussions for Warren County pertaining to housing the homeless. Mr. Pitkin said he had been impressed with the Chenango County facility. Ms. Weaver advised some renovations would need to be completed at Countryside Adult Home if

the decision was made to house the homeless there. In answer to a question pertaining to school aged homeless, Ms. Weaver responded State Law mandated the children be transported to the school district where they had previously lived.

Discussion ensued pertaining to the possibility of housing homeless at Countryside Adult Home.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Margaret Sing-Smith, Director of the Warren County Youth Bureau, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Smith reported the Warren County Youth Court would be downsized but would continue through 2010 despite the loss of \$44,804 in funding. She added the contract with the Council for Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse to operate the program would continue, as well. Mr. Pitkin asked how the program would be downsized and Ms. Smith replied there would be limited focus on Towns in the northern part of the County. Mr. Dusek stated Ms. Smith and David Saffer, Executive Director of the Council for Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, had done a good job in reducing the Youth Court budget. He added they would be researching opportunities to work with other not-for-profit groups to try to redeem aspects of Youth Court and to enhance the program. Ms. Smith said Youth Court had benefitted from two private grants through the New York State Bar Association and the Warren County Bar Association. She added the Town of Queensbury continued to assist the Youth Court with funding. Ms. Smith announced out of 200 Youth Courts in New York State, the Warren County Youth Court was one of eight designated as a best practices model program. She added in later June there would be a recognition ceremony for the seniors participating in Youth Court.

Ms. Smith announced the Youth Bureau and the DSS had worked together to initiate the Safe TALK Suicide Alertness Training Program in Warren County. Mr. Pitkin said CCE staff members had been very impressed with the Safe TALK Suicide Alertness Training Program.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Strainer, Mr. Pitkin adjourned the meeting at 12:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist
As typed by Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist